



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
Parks and Recreation

**ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COUNCIL
CITY OF BLOOMINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION
REGULAR MEETING**

Wednesday, February 12th, 2020
4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Bloomington Parks and Recreation
Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER

Shelton called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Sue Sgambelluri, Denise Gardiner, Dan Myers, Angie Shelton, Cathy Meyer, David Parkhurst, Sarah Murray

Staff Present: Steve Cotter, Sonja Pope

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Shelton moved approval of the December minutes, Meyer seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

A. Public Appearances

Parkhurst was here representing the Environmental Commission. Parkhurst went on to explain how the Trump Administration wants to weaken Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) requirements covered under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). EISs are meant to protect the environment as well as protect public health. EISs have been previously used to clean up polluted sites around Bloomington. He implores ERAC members to write to their local representatives as well as voice concerns directly on a website that he will share.

B. OLD BUSINESS

B-1 CHAP Results

Cotter explained that CHAP stands for Community Hunting Access Program. For the first time last year, BPR was successful in reducing the deer population at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve using hunters. In 2017, White Buffalo Inc. sharpshooters removed 62 deer from the two square mile Preserve. A CHAP hunt was attempted in 2018 but not enough hunters applied to do it. 320 invitations were sent out in 2019 and 65 responses were received. Of those, 26 applicants successfully passed the proficiency screening, which required each hunter to hit a bullseye within two inches of the center from 50 yards three times in a row within the first three shots. Applicants who weren't successful on the first attempt were allowed a second attempt. The first weekend of the CHAP hunt coincided with the opening of deer firearm season. Hunters removed 26 deer. Cotter stated that 26 deer out of two square miles is two and a half times more deer than we think should be in the Preserve for the ecological goals of the program to be reached. Experts have said the goal should be to get down to about five deer per square mile so plants, which have been eaten by the deer, can grow large enough to reproduce. Evidence that the deer population should be reduced at Griffy came from ERAC member, Angie Shelton's

research on deer browse impacts as well as input from a Deer Task Force created back in 2011.

We have met with DNR and the report that White Buffalo submitted is sufficient for CHAP program reimbursement. There was a question over whether we would be fully reimbursed because we had hoped to have up to 300 different hunting opportunities. We only ended up having about 50 hunter days, and of those, many were impacted by bad weather. Sgambelluri asked Cotter if there was an estimated total number of deer at Griffy to which Cotter replied that an official count has not been done. Sgambelluri explained her position as ERAC's appointed Council Liaison and that she received email correspondence from a community member asking about her stance on "the continued murder of deer at Griffy".

Parkhurst explains why he supports the CHAP hunt as a botanist and encourages everyone to read Shelton's deer browse research conducted on the IU Research and Teaching Preserve (IURTP). Shelton offers the research highlights. When it gets to the point where the deer are starving, then there are virtually no understory plants left. That is the main motivation for the COB to participate in the CHAP program, to protect and promote the plant biodiversity within the Preserve. The Griffy Lake Masterplan from 2008 has a full list of the plants and wildlife found around the park that depend on a healthy diverse population of plants and young trees. Unfortunately, deer directly reduce the diversity of plants and number of young trees/wildflowers. This is an issue when you also consider the regeneration of a forest as well as overall ecosystem functions/benefits. If there are no young native trees to replace the mature/dying trees, then we will be left with an unstable ecosystem. Moreover, more deer means more ticks which can create increased public health concerns.

Sgambelluri asked Shelton how often she recommends a study like that be done on Griffy, to which Shelton replied that COB continues to perform vegetation monitoring throughout the park to look for deer browse indicators. Cotter continued on to say that BPR hired Eco Logic to conduct a floral inventory and monitor deer browse around the park. One of the best ways to monitor deer browse continues to be taking an inventory of the number palatable plants present. [Q&A about managing deer within city limits on private property]. Cotter concludes that there are plans to coordinate another CHAP hunt in 2020.

B-2 Griffy Pier/Loop Trail Update

Cotter explained that the Griffy Pier project will be an accessible fishing pier on the west side of the causeway. A loop trail around the western portion of the lake will incorporate the accessible fishing pier. Contractors will build the pier out from the west side of the road across from the Griffy Boathouse and then build a pedestrian causeway along the west side of Headley Rd. This pedestrian walkway will allow people to get to the trails on the north and south side of the lake. The Proposed Griffy Loop Trail will be connected and constructed on existing north shore and south side trails. Hopefully, with the permission and support from COB Utilities, the trail route will go across the dam. Vic Kelson, Director CBU, has asked that BPR participate in a feasibility study to construct a trail on the dam. Staff is hopeful that eventually a trail will be built across the dam. We're going to work with IURTP about accessing their trails. Cotter met City's planning and transportation staff about planned guardrails along Headley Rd. Installation will be postponed until the pedestrian causeway is completed. Shelton asked about addressing erosion issues along the existing North Shore Loop Trail, to which Cotter replied that BPR is working with design consultants to come up with solutions using large stones and other support methods. This is especially a concern at spots where people and their dogs try to get down to the water. The ground is completely stripped of vegetation in several areas. Cotter is hopeful the trail design will direct people to lookout points, but off leash dogs will continue to be a challenge

that we need to try to dissuade. Ferguson Dog Park provides an off-leash park but people still allow their dogs to continue to run off-leash at Griffy.

B-3 Switchyard Park Update

Cotter begins by saying that Switchyard Park was opened November 16th and 17th. People are loving the Pavilion, there are a lot of 2020 events scheduled. Two days have been carved out for Bird Fest on April 4th and the Earth Day celebration on April 18th. The contractors are finishing up the dog park. They're putting in several acres of permeable surfaces and working on curbing and fencing along S. Rogers. There was an issue with the floor in the Pavilion after settling. They're not sure what's going on but there's some cracking, and this is bad because there are heating elements in the floor. The splashpad is completed for the most part and the amphitheater is done. Shelton asks when the dog park will be completed and if the new grass areas will be roped off while things get established. Cotter replied that it will be completed by May 3rd and will be roped off until it is ok for people to walk on. The dog park will have two fenced off areas. There will be a small and a large dog area.

B-4 Leonard Springs Water Quality Update

Leonard Springs Nature Park contains an old lake bed that used to be the water source for Bloomington, one of the several failed water sources, that fortunately has become a park. The reason they failed is because of the karst topography. BPR includes several parks that used to be water sources such as TLRC, Wapehani, Leonard Springs, and Griffy. Griffy Lake is the only one that still holds water because it has sandstone underneath it. Griffy Lake is still an emergency water source for the City. Shirley Springs is on the north side of LSNP and Leonard Springs lies to the west. During Leonard Springs Nature Days 6th graders study macroinvertebrates out of Shirley Springs Creek. In the fall of 2019 the facilitators who were collecting the critters had issues finding them, and the ones they did find were often dead. The levels of E. Coli are high, but it is unknown if the bacteria re from humans or other animals. off Additional samples have been tested by Pace Labs. One of our Educational Specialists has also been routinely going out there to check for macros. Should have results from Pace Lab soon to find out more. It is possible that faulty septic systems or nearby pasture animals could be the source of the bacteria. BPRD continues to monitor the situation with help from the Monroe County Health Department and Monroe County Planning and Transportation.

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1 Election of Officers and ERAC Guidelines

Cotter states that reappointed positions were approved by the Park Board. Meyers moved to retain the current officers. Sgambelluri seconded. President Melissa Clark and Vice President Angie Shelton, were elected. No one was opposed. Cotter states ERAC Guidelines will be discussed in April.

C-2 Education Update

Meyer gives an update on upcoming educational opportunities. Bird Fest at Switchyard Park coming up. Cotter stated that Earth Day (4-18) and Bird Fest (4-4) are on scheduled to take place at Switchyard Park. Wild Flower Foray Hikes and talks are set up for end of April. MC-IRIS has a series of workshops scheduled to identify and control invasive plants, info can be found on their website. Cotter said L326, Heather Reynold's, biology class, created a brochure highlighting species that you may see on the loop trail. It will be available at the Griffy Boathouse. Parkhurst says the City's Tree Commission would like to find a class, or intern, or work study student, who could do research and take the recently collected tree inventory in

Bloomington and connect it to housing costs across the city. Shelton offers her students to volunteer at Bird Fest if they don't need to know anything extensively about birds. Meyer states that First Saturdays/Weed Wrangle Workdays will start in March.

C-3 Cascades Trail

Cotter stated the creek bank on the west side of creek will be cut back in places and limestone mill blocks will be used in a 'staircase design' so that there will be more room for the water to move through the channel. The plan includes designs to close the existing Waterfall Shelter parking lot and to discourage people from playing in the water/sliding down the slope. COB is still planning to test out closing the road starting near the Sycamore Shelter and extending south to just before the IMI entrance. The closing date will be announced. Cotter said the project is set to begin within the next year and already has funding. Shelton recommended we get local limestone sources and Meyer recommends replacing the historical stone table tops that have become damaged. Cotter asks that any additional recommendations be sent to Cotter or Rebecca Jania.

C-4 2020 Initiatives and Topics of Interest

See C-5 notes.

C-5 April 2020 Meeting Agenda Items

Shelton decided to tie these last two agenda items together. Some Topics of Interest/April Agenda Items mentioned: Cascades Trail updates, LSNP water tests (if results are back). Invasive management in the spring possibly. Update on Adopt-an-Acre/Stream/Trail programs. Continued discussion of Switchyard Park. Discussion of B-Line extension. Replacement of Boot Brushes and Trailhead Signs.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

The next ERAC meeting will be held at 4:30 on Wednesday, April 8th, 2020 via Zoom.

The Meeting ID: 142 405 205 Join: <https://zoom.us/j/142405205>